

## Report of the International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium, Thailand, 2008

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The IEF (International Elephant Foundation) is a non-profit corporation and was formed in 1998 to promote conservation of African and Asian elephants. The mission of the IEF is to support and operate elephant conservation and education programs both in managed facilities and in the wild, with emphasis on management, protection and scientific research. In 2009 the IEF is supporting 12 in-situ projects for African and Asian elephants but also ex-situ projects for both species.

The International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium is an annual conference and provides a platform for the exchange of information and ideas for scientists and conservationists who work and care about elephants. In 2008 the International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium took place at the Nong Nooch Tropical Botanical Garden in Thailand from November 24 to 26, 2008. The Symposium was organized by the IEF, the AEFT (Asian Elephant Foundation) and the

Faculty of Veterinary Science of the Mahidol University.

As chair of the GEMP (Global Elephant Management Program) it was an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation to Dr. Parntep Ratanakorn for organizing and hosting the symposium in Thailand. Dr. Ratanakorn is secretary general of the Asian Elephant Foundation (AEFT) but also associate professor and a director in the Monitoring and Surveillance Center for Zoonotic Disease on Wildlife and Exotic Animal (MoZWE) and last but not least a local representative of Thailand for the GEMP.

In total 203 elephant specialists from 17 countries (Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Laos, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Netherlands, United Kingdom, USA) came to Thailand to join this important scientific Symposium. A wide range of presentations were on the program - 47 oral papers and 6 posters were presented. The



The organization team of the IEF Symposium 2008

topics concentrated on in-situ and ex-situ elephant conservation and research, human elephant conflict, elephant health issues, reproduction, behavior and management.

The ASERC (Austrian Sri Lankan Elephant Research and Conservation Project) had the possibility for funding travel costs for some colleagues from Sri Lanka and therefore eight talks could be presented by Sri Lankan elephant specialists.

The symposium was followed by a closed one-day EEHV (elephant endotheliotropic herpes virus) workshop and a one-day closed meeting of the GEMP (Global Elephant Management Program).

A pre-tour to the annual Surin Elephant Festival, which is the most popular and visited festival of Thailand was organized for the participants and was an extra-ordinary highlight and unforgettable experience for all. At Surin itself the festival takes

place over two days and around 300 elephants were shown. The everyday life of the elephant and its mahout was the central theme of the world-famous Surin Elephant Round-up held each year since 1960. The festival is also a fascinating tribute to all things “elephant” – including many excellent show-acts performing old-time elephant hunts, demonstrations of intelligence, strength and gentility, and the spectacular re-enactment of a war elephant parade.

The next International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium takes place from January 24. to 30, 2010 and will be hosted by the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa. The conference venue is located 45 km north of Pretoria at the Kwalata Game Ranch. Further information will be soon on the IEF website at [www.elephantconservation.org](http://www.elephantconservation.org).

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War elephant at Surin